INTRODUCTION:
1. As a congregation grows, it is likely to face various challenges:
   A. The devil would certainly love to hinder or stop us in our work - 1 Thess. 2:18
   B. How he does this may not always be evident, as he is a great deceiver - 2 Cor. 11:3
      1. Through simple and seemingly harmless diversions, the devil can lead us astray if we will allow it to happen.
      2. We must take up the admonition to “hold fast” – Rev. 3:11.
         A. Overcoming any challenges the devil might throw our way.
         B. Knowing that our efforts to be "steadfast" are not for nothing - 1 Cor. 15:58.
4. In our study we will look at some challenges that every congregation must meet to serve the Lord faithfully.

BODY:
1. THE CHALLENGE TO REMEMBER WHAT OUR WORK IS.
   A. Far too many times this is where problems arise.
      1. We do not remember what our work as the church is.
   B. We need to remember that our work involves equipping the saints for ministry or edification.
      1. We are to provide for the spiritual growth of each member – Eph. 4:11,12.
      2. This is how the body continues to grow – Eph. 4:15, 16.
      3. To accomplish this we must provoke one another to love and good works – Heb. 10:24, 25.
         A. One of the reasons that we are to assemble together is to do this.
         B. The question is, is each of us doing what we can to help other Christians grow?
2. THE CHALLENGE TO SOUND FORTH THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.
   A. Like the church at Thessalonica - 1 Thess. 1:8.
   B. Through individual and collective efforts, we must “sow the seed.”
   C. Often times as time passes it becomes tempting to slack off.
      1. But we must remember that we hold in our hands the power of God unto salvation – Rom. 1:16.
      2. We need to remember that the souls of our friends and neighbors are so valuable that Jesus died for them – Rom. 5:8.
      3. We need to remember that those who leave this world outside of Christ will be lost – 2 Thess. 1:8.
   D. The question to each of us here is, is each of us doing what we can to spread the gospel?
3. THE CHALLENGE TO PROVIDE FOR NEEEDY SAINTS.
   A. This was the original purpose behind the collection - 1 Cor. 16:1, 2.
B. As the church we need to recognize that even if there is no need locally, there may be needy saints in other places.
   1. We do not want to pass up opportunities to do good – Gal. 6:10.
      A. Please pay careful attention to the phrase “all men.”
   2. We do not want to pass up opportunities to practice pure religion – Jas. 1:27.
C. Here, again, the question to each of us is, is each one of us doing what we can to see that needs are being met?
   1. The work of the local church goes far beyond providing a place where people worship from week to week.
   2. We should be preparing ourselves to work!

4. THE CHALLENGE TO LIVE ABOVE PETTINESS.
   A. Even good churches can be hindered by pettiness.
      1. Notice Paul's concern for the church at Philippi – Phil. 4:2, 3.
      2. When churches loose sight of their primary purpose, they are ripe for being torn asunder by selfishness, gossip, and factions.
   B. We must keep a proper sense of proportion.
      1. It is disastrous when we begin to “major in minors.”
         A. Small problems begin to be blown out of proportion.
      2. We must see the largeness and importance of our work in comparison to our problems.
         A. Every church has its problems, for we are composed of imperfect people.
      3. If we would but remember Paul's exhortations in Philippians 2:1-5 they would surely help!
   C. Congregations need to accept the challenge never to allow pettiness to so affect them that they destroy themselves.

5. THE CHALLENGE TO MAINTAIN GRATITUDE FOR OUR BLESSINGS.
   A. We have much for which to be thankful.
      1. As individuals:
         A. We have many physical blessings.
            1. Our families, friends, homes, health, freedom and jobs.
         B. We have many spiritual blessings.
            1. Salvation in Christ, the forgiveness of sins, peace of mind.
            2. The love of God, the strength of the Word of God, the hope of heaven.
      2. As a congregation:
         A. Hopefully free from turmoil, free to worship, filled with love and unity.
         B. Blessed with good facilities with the possibility of numerical and spiritual growth.
         C. Great potential for both individual and congregational growth
   B. We should be noted for our "attitude of gratitude.”
1. Note how often Paul exhorted the Colossians to be thankful:
   A. Giving thanks to the Father – Col. 1:12.
   B. Abounding with thanksgiving – Col. 2:7.
   C. As the peace of God rules in your heart, be thankful - Col. 3:15.
   D. Giving thanks to God – Col. 3:17.
   E. Be vigilant in prayer with thanksgiving – Col. 4:2.
2. As individuals, and as a congregation, let us never become unthankful when it comes to the blessings we receive from God.
3. When we do become unthankful:
   A. It is a step toward depravity – Rom. 1:21.
   B. It is a sign of perilous times - 2 Tim. 3:1-5.

CONCLUSION:
1. There are many other challenges that congregations may face.
   A. Such as persecution for the cause of Christ.
   B. Natural calamities that may devastate the community.
2. But in most cases, even those challenges can be met and overcome.